

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2447

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

USUN NEW YORK 1309

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1015

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR KS KN

SUBJECT: ROK CLAIMS NORTH KOREA IS PREPARED TO INVADE

REF: SEOUL 776

1. ROK'S ANTI-NORTH KOREAN PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN IS CONTINUING. LATEST IS FEBRUARY 9 ANNOUNCEMENT BY MINISTRY OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION SPOKESMAN KIM TONG-HO THAT THE NORTH IS PREPARED TO INVADE THE SOUTH. PURPORTEDLY RESPONDING TO THREATS OF INVASION MADE AT A NORTH KOREAN PEOPLES ARMY (KPA) ANNIVERSARY CEREMONY FEBRUARY 8, KIM CHARGED THAT NORTH KOREA HAS MOVED OPERATIONAL BASES AND RIVER-CROSSING EQUIPMENT SOUTHWARD AND HAS BEEN CONDUCTING SPECIAL LARGE-SCALE MILITARY EXERCISES. CONCLUSION, GIVEN FRONT PAGE PLAY BY PRESS FOLLOWING KIM'S REMARKS, IT THAT PYONGYANG REGARDS MILITARY SOLUTION TO UNIFICATION PROBLEM AS NECESSARY AND IS UNWILLING TO COMPROMISE WITH SEOUL.

2. KPA ANNIVERSARY COMMENTS REFERRED TO BY KIM MOST PROBABLY WERE THOSE MADE BY COLONEL GENERAL YI YONG-MU, ALTHOUGH ENGLISH ACCOUNT OF YI REPORT BROADCAST BY PYONGYANG (FBIS B080437) DOES
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NOT INCLUDE THE QUOTATIONS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY KIM. YI DID STRESS

THE OFFENSIVE AND DEFENSIVE CAPABILITIES OF THE FULLY-DEVELOPED KPA, BUT HIS MOST FORCEFUL WORDS PERTAINED TO THE ABILITY TO RESIST AN ATTACK BY THE SOUTH, AND HIS SPEECH DOES NOT APPEAR TO CONSTITUTE A DIRECT THREAT OF OFFENSIVE MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THE SOUTH. WHILE KIM QUOTED THE NORTH KOREANS AS SAYING THAT "NO COMPROMISE IS POSSIBLE WITH THE SOUTH KOREAN AUTHORITIES" AND THAT "UNIFICATION OF THE FATHERLAND CAN BE ACHIEVED ONLY BY MEANS OF ARMED STRUGGLE," SUCH REMARKS CANNOT BE FOUND IN THE FBIS REPORT OF PYONGYANG BROADCAST AND YI APPEARED TO LEAVE THE DOOR OPEN FOR THE SOUTH TO ACCEPT THE FIVE PRINCIPLES. KIM CHARGED THAT YI HAD SAID THE NORTH WAS FULLY PREPARED TO CRUSH ITS ENEMIES IN THE SOUTH AT ONE STROKE. ONLY SIMILAR COMMENT BROADCAST BY PYONGYANG QUOTED YI AS SAYING THE KPA WAS "FULLY PREPARED TO REPULSE ANY INVASION OF THE ENEMY AT A STROKE."

3. MILITARY ACTIVITY REFERRED TO BY KIM SEEMS TO BE PART OF NORMAL NORTH KOREAN TRAINING CYCLE OF PAST MONTHS. WE KNOW OF NO MOVEMENTS OF MEN OR EQUIPMENT WHICH APPEAR ANY MORE PROVOCATIVE THAN THOSE CONDUCTED IN THE PAST.

4. COMMENT: KIM'S REMARKS WERE MADE IN THE CONTEXT OF AN ONGOING PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY THE ROKG PARTLY FOR CONSUMPTION BY ITS OWN CITIZENS AND PARTLY IN RESPONSE TO INCREASED ANTI-ROKG BROADCASTS BY THE NORTH. OTHER ROKG OFFICIALS HAVE MADE PUBLIC COMMENTS (REFTEL) REGARDING NORTH KOREAN INTENTION TO REUNITE KOREA BY FORCE. KIM'S ALLEGATIONS APPEAR MORE URGENT AND STARK THAN EARLIER ANTI-NORTH KOREAN PRONOUNCEMENTS, BUT IT MAY BE THAT THE KPA ANNIVERSARY MERELY PROVIDED A CONVENIENT OPPORTUNITY FOR THE ROKG TO HEIGHTEN PITCH OF ITS CAMPAIGN.

5. KOREAN PRESS GAVE STORY FRONT PAGE TREATMENT, BUT NEITHER UNCPRO NOR USIS HAS RECEIVED ANY QUERIES FROM KOREAN PRESSMEN WHO PROBABLY CONSIDER MCUI STATEMENT STANDARD FARE.

6. IN EVENT WE QUERIED BY KOREAN NEWSMEN WILL SIMPLY NOTE STATEMENT CAME FROM ROK GOVERNMENT AGENCY AND REFER THEM TO MCUI. IF APPROACHED BY U.S. NEWSMEN EITHER HERE OR IN WASHINGTON WOULD RECOMMEND WE INDICATE WE AWARE NORTH KOREAN SPEECH BUT WE DO NOT READ INTO IT THREAT OF EARLY INVASION OF SOUTH, WOULD ALSO NOTE WE KNOW OF NO NORTH KOREAN MILITARY MOVEMENTS WHICH APPEAR ANY

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MORE PROVOCATIVE THAN THOSE CONDUCTED IN THE PAST.
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